

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-10 AF-06 /074 W

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R 231628Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2599

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LISBON 2356

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: AFM SUPPORTS BLANK VOTE

REFS: (A) LISBON 2259; (B) LISBON 2328

1. AS THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN DRAWS TO A CLOSE, THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) IS INCREASINGLY URGING "POLITICALLY IGNORANT" VOTERS TO CAST BLANK BALLOTS ON APRIL 25.

2. NATIONAL RADIO AND TV STATIONS CARRIED A COMMUNIQUE ON THE SUBJECT APRIL 22. THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE AFM BULLETIN ALSO TOOK UP THE BLANK VOTE QUESTION. THE THRUST OF THE AFM MESSAGE IS THAT THE CASTING OF A BLANK BALLOT IS NEITHER A CRIME NOR TREASON; A BLANK VOTE IS NOT A WASTED ONE BUT IS AS GOOD AS A VOTE FOR A PARTY; IN VIEW OF WIDESPREAD CONFUSION AMONG THE ELECTORATE, AND THE DANGER THAT THE UNINFORMED MIGHT BE LED TO VOTE AGAINST THEIR BEST INTERESTS (I.E., VOTE CONSERVATIVE), A BLANK BALLOT IS THE UNINFORMED'S BEST CHOICE. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THE AFM

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HAS BROADLY HINTED THAT A BLANK VOTE IS A VOTE FOR THE AFM.

3. THE AFM STATEMENTS ARE A REACTION TO SUSTAINED OPPOSITION BY MODERATE PARTIES TO THE BLANK BALLOT. THE PPD, SOCIALIST, AND CDS THEME HAS BEEN THAT A BLANK VOTE IS "WORTHLESS," WASTED, AND AN ABDICATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE AFM APPEAL IS NOTHING BUT A TACTIC TO SIPHON OFF MODERATE VOTES AND DISTORT THE PUBLIC WILL. TO THE LEFT OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY ONLY MANUEL SERRA'S FSP HAS SIDED WITH THE MODERATES ON THE ISSUE.

4. LINING UP WITH THE AFM ARE THE MES, LUAR, AND INTERSINDICAL. THE PCP HAS MADE NO PRONOUNCEMENT TO DATE ON THE ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: WHILE MOST UNLIKELY, A PCP CALL FOR ITS MILITANTS TO FOLLOW INTERSINDICAL'S LEAD AND CAST A BLANK BALLOT CANNOT BE TOTALLY RULED OUT.

6. A SIGNIFICANT BLANK VOTE WOULD SERVE AFM INTERESTS BY SUPPORTING THE AFM'S CONTENTION THAT PORTUGAL IS NOT READY FOR FULL DEMOCRACY AND MUST BE GUIDED BY AN AFM WHICH REPRESENTS THE "WILL OF THE PEOPLE."
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Message Attributes

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